

What does Public Health Seattle-King County do for you?

- tracks and monitors diseases like West Nile Virus and tuberculosis,
- creates and promotes anti-smoking education campaigns,
- prepares for emergencies such as earthquakes and Pandemic Flu,
- controls the spread of rats in our neighborhoods,
- collects and provides disease prevalence data to doctors and nurses, and sends alerts of disease outbreaks,
- cleans up meth labs,
- works with businesses to ensure foods like E. coli-tainted spinach are removed from grocery stores and restaurants,
- conducts autopsies for criminal investigations,
- runs jail health services for all inmates entering the King County jail,
- partners with businesses and community groups to promote healthy eating and exercise, and
- ensures that our drinking water is safe.

For more information about Public Health Seattle-King County, please call: 206.296.4600 or visit their website: <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/>



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Look inside for an update on Public Health



December 2006

Metropolitan
King County Council

Public Health Update
From Councilmembers

JULIA PATTERSON & BOB FERGUSON

Dear Neighbor,

Over the course of the last year, we have taken a close look at improving Public Health Seattle-King County. Our county faces a growing uninsured population, threats of a pandemic flu, and more people who have chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and obesity. We must set priorities in order to keep people healthy.

This newsletter provides information about the services Public Health currently provides, why our public health centers were threatened to be closed, and the health challenges facing King County residents.

Please contact us if you have questions about Public Health or any other King County matter. It is a privilege and honor to serve you.

Sincerely,

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Julia Bob
PATTERSON & FERGUSON
WORKING HARD TO KEEP US SAFE AND HEALTHY

Services our Public Health Centers Provide:

- Adult and Child Immunizations
- Dental Services
- Family Planning/Pregnancy Testing
- HIV Screening
- School Inspections
- Home Visits for New Mothers
- Tuberculosis Testing
- Family Social Workers
- Family Primary Care
- Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program
- Interpreters



Public Health Centers will stay open

In August, the Public Health Department recommended the closure of two Public Health Centers to balance their budget. After hearing that the North Center and the Northshore Center, both in Councilmember Ferguson's district, would close at the end of 2006, we quickly took action.

The King County Executive proposed the County Council approve funding to keep the centers open through June of 2007. We went one step further and, in the council's budget, ensured that both health centers will remain open for all of 2007.

Next year, however, we have more work to do. We will appoint a group of experts, community members, and center employees to work with us on how we can guarantee the uninsured and underinsured have access to health care services. We look forward to their recommendations, and remain committed to making sure we do not let the people lose their 'medical home'.



Why the Public Health Centers are Struggling

1. In King County, 1 in 6 individuals are uninsured, and this number continues to rise. Without community clinics and public health centers, they have nowhere to go for medical care.



2. Cost of care is becoming more expensive, while Medicaid and private insurance are falling behind in reimbursing doctors for the care they provide.

3. More people suffer from chronic illnesses than ever before. Conditions like diabetes, heart disease, obesity and asthma cause patients to visit their doctors more frequently than healthy patients, and their care is much more expensive.



"Health care is vital to all of us some of the time, but public health is vital to all of us all of the time."

– C. Everett Koop